

NSC BRIEFING

28 September 1960

CUBA

- I. Castro regime has become virtually a member of Soviet bloc.
 - A. During 25 September private talk with Castro in New York, [REDACTED] got the strong feeling that Castro is "neither independent nor neutral, but is already committed to the Soviet bloc."
 - B. First major bloc arms shipment arrived 8 September.
 - 1. Included ten tanks, 100 antiaircraft guns, machineguns, large quantities of ammo and electronic equipment.
 - 2. More ships en route.
 - 3. A number of Cubans have been undergoing training in Czechoslovakia for some months, possibly for jet aircraft.
- II. Provocative anti-US acts continue.
 - A. Ambassador Bonsal noted that 19 September demonstrators protesting alleged indignities suffered by Castro in New York were unusually determined and could easily have been incited to violence had government so desired.
 - B. An embassy officer recently informed by a friend in Cuban foreign ministry that Cuba preparing break diplomatic relations with US.
 - 1. New Cuban chargé in Washington may provoke US request for his recall as pretext for ouster of US Ambassador.

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C. Castro regime has apparently decided to launch campaign designed to cause US to evacuate Guantanamo naval base.

1. Campaign would probably be launched at a new "Assembly of Cuban People" called at time regime feels it needs a new dramatic appeal for popular support.
2. Likely to be in form of strong propaganda campaign aimed at subjecting US to worldwide pressure on issue, and could be accompanied by provocative acts designed to force US counteraction that could be exploited in propaganda.
3. Might also involve appeal to UN Security Council or General Assembly. (On leaving New York 28 Sept, Castro said he would return in week or ten days.)
4. Such a campaign would be consistent with Cuban Communist party program adopted at August congress.

III. Trends toward tighter dictatorship and increased Communist control continue.

- A. Last independent TV-radio network seized 12 September.
- B. Last vestiges of an independent judiciary fast disappearing under pressure government campaign to "revolutionize" judicial branch.
- C. "United front" groups being formed in municipalities in an evident Communist effort to build Communist-dominated political machine at grass roots.
- D. Communists have now virtually completed capture of powerful Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC), which takes leading role in organizing Castro's mass rallies.

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IV. Government facing growing unrest.

A. Guerrilla activity continues in Escambray mountains and government apparently having trouble in efforts to destroy the estimated several hundred guerrillas.

1. An American engineer who had been working in area said 16 September that situation becoming too dangerous to continue; prolonged gunfire heard nightly and travel on roads hazardous even in daytime.
2. He added that one guerrilla band composed of about 200 well-armed and well-trained ex-Castro soldiers.
3. Other sources report guerrillas getting stronger with new recruits and supplies coming in from opposition groups in Havana, other cities. However, guerrilla bands still apparently divided into mutually antagonistic groups.

B. Spontaneous clashes between pro-Castro and anti-Communist groups in a town in Matanzas province led to anti-government demonstrations suppressed only after police and militia fired into demonstrators. Resentment high.

C. Workers on Havana's waterfront grumbling at Communist seizure of unions and over their own declining income.

1. They also complain at exacting requirements of Soviet ships loading sugar.

V. Economy showing signs of serious weakness.

- A. Cost of living rising steadily and consumer goods getting scarce.
- B. Nationalized oil refineries forced to cut back because of shortages in catalysts used in refining process.

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1. Also, high sulfur content of Soviet oil causing corrosion in refineries, which are having trouble getting needed spare parts.
2. Heavy lubricants also in short supply and government attempting to force private companies in US to front for government purchases.

VI. In Castro speech last night, two notable points.

- A. Stated again that would recover Guantanamo through "international law".
- B. Called for formation of local "vigilante committees"--appears to be Communist "block system" of informers.

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